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AUTHOR Fadale, Vincent E.; Fadale, LaVerna M.
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ABSTRACT

This pilot study was designed to determine the feasibility of fusing career-oriented activities into the curriculum of a regularly scheduled college course, based on the expressed needs of the students. Subjects were 16 juniors and seniors enrolled in an introductory counseling course at the State University of New York at Cortland. During the first session the Hall Occupational Orientation Inventory and the Temperament Check List were administered, for use as data collection within the pretest-posttest research design and also to be incorporated into class activities. The activity or treatment phase was organized within four categories; group procedures, individual sessions, resource materials and personnel, and visitations. Results indicate that changes occurred involving student interpretations, concerns, and viewpoints. The author hypothesized that the course encouraged career realism in terms of self, flexibility of goals, and acceptance of ambiguity within society. (Author/SES)

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CAREERS AND COLLEGE STUDENTS

Dr. Vincent E. Fadale
State University College
Cortland, New York

Ms. LaVerna M. Fadale
Cornell University
Ithaca, New York

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Vincent E. Fadale
State University of New York at Cortland

LaVerna M. Fadale
Cornell University

Introduction

"A degree in the liberal arts is not a passport to a job but in a majority of instances, a prelude to graduate work or professional education." The availability to students of this type of realistic information is the concern of interested personnel at both public school and college levels. Colleges of late are beginning to perceive their necessary role in the career development of college students. Previously all too often the concern of colleges with career development has been limited to placement.

The college student of today is in a state of development and growth. Research reviews (1) indicate that values, cognition, personality, decisions, and career choice are in a state of development. The choice of vocation is indecisive in many instances. This is not surprising in view of present day society. The culture "retards" maturity so that in essence, the

college student is an adolescent in terms of career choice and development. (2)Perhaps Tiedeman's theory of career development best acknowledges this state of uncertainty by emphasizing alternatives, modification, tentative decisions and evolving identity. (3)

Additionally the labor picture is one of ambiguity. Supply and demand for workers are in a state of flux. Technology continues to play a major role within the rather uncertain labor market. Prospects for workers becomes unclear. The college must be cognizant and prepared to meet the career concerns of their students in relation to the status of the employment picture.

The problem confronting a college community becomes how to best meet the needs of these students concerned with career development and choice. One approach is through a class situation. This pilot study deals with the question: Is it feasible to develop career orientation effectively within a college course and in keeping with expressed student concerns?

Methodology

The problem is the determination of the feasibility of providing an "information bank" of career and/or self, in terms of student concerns, within a formal college course. The subjects consisted of 16 undergraduates,

mainly junior and senior recreation majors, enrolled in an introductory course in counseling at the State University of New York at Cortland and taught by the primary investigator. The group met twice a week for a total of 2½ hours per week throughout the 1972 fall semester.

During the first session two career-oriented instruments were administered as pretests: the Hall Occupational Orientation Inventory (4) and the Temperament Check List. (5) These instruments had a two-fold purpose. First, they were used as data collection within the pretest-posttest research design. Second, they were incorporated into class activities. The Hall Inventory and the Temperament Scale were chosen as they not only complemented and reinforced each other, but also focused on psychological constructs.

The class in counseling was easily applicable to a career emphasis. By its very nature, the course emphasized the self, the person and the individual within a helping relationship. This orientation provided the foundation for career-oriented activities.

Initially, reference to careers and vocations was made through discussions, materials, and examples by the instructor. Whenever possible, class activities and

experiences within the context of the course were concerned with vocational aspects. The objective was to emphasize the relationship of careers to every situation. In time students took the initiative, and class experiences seemed to naturally adopt a career-orientation flavor.

The activity or treatment phase of this study was generally organized within four categories; group procedures, individual sessions, resource materials and personnel, and visitations. During each experience there was an emphasis with interrelationships to occupations. The four experience categories are briefly described in the following paragraphs.

I. Group Procedures. This category emphasized interaction and reaction by the members of the group to the topic at hand.

a) One activity involved student presentations which were followed by group interactions and discussions in light of the content and emphasis. The presentations included topics dealing with vocational tests and agency visitations. For example, the Kuder Inventory was administered as part of one student presentation and follwed by group reactions to it. Reports from individual visitations to agencies within the area were also presented. Students opted

to visit social service agencies, senior citizen agencies, employment agencies, and hospital agencies. They returned to the group with their findings, reactions and questions. The discussions evolving from these presentations focused on aspects relevant to counseling, to careers and to the self.

b) Another activity within the category consisted of group interactions emphasizing career growth and awareness. These sessions focused on attitudes and personal situations. Several of the students were recruiting for jobs. Individual experiences in the job search were brought to the group and discussed. The reality of the job search emphasized the need for flexibility and the extending to related fields within the ambiguous"real working world."

c) Attendance at a conference by some class members provided realistic feedback as to the employment picture. This information provided a nucleus for discussion.

II. Resource Materials and Personnel. The second category, resource materials and personnel, contributed to the comprehensiveness of several

aspects:

a) The Career Planning and Placement Director served as a resource person. The group directed the discussion, and he responded to their questions and concerns.

b) Student presentations of individual visitations contributed information, as well as reactions, to alternate application of their training in related fields that might offer employment possibilities.

c) Materials dealing with careers were introduced to the group for student knowledge and utilization. Typical of these materials were the Department of Labor forecasts and job trends, Federal and State Civil Service examinations and their potential career possibilities were incorporated to add to the career information bank of each student.

III. Visitations. In addition to individual visitations to agencies, the class as a group visited a near-by state school for girls. (Lansing, New York) Although the primary objective was to observe therapy and counseling, employment and career opportunities within this context, the area of correction, were

explored.

IV. Individual Sessions. Several of the students availed themselves of the opportunity to meet with the principal investigator in a one-to-one counseling situation. In addition to personal and career concerns, topics such as transferring, graduate school, job search and veteran status were emphasized.

At the conclusion of the activity or treatment phase, the last class meeting, the Hall Inventory, the Temperament Check List and open-ended reaction questions were administered as posttests.

Presentation of Results

Utilization of one-way analysis of variance and the F ratio revealed no significant change between the pretest and posttest scores. There was evidence, however, of the process of change which indicates a feasibility of incorporating career oriented activities into a college course.

The Hall Inventory is scored as to stanines on scales dealing with psychological constructs within vocational development. The process of change is evidenced from its pretest scores to posttest scores by the following

observations:

1. 35% of the responses on the scales were changed two or more stanines.
2. 69% of the students changed on a minimum of three scales a total of two or more stanines.

The Temperament Check List is scored as to delineation of the top three temperaments as determined by the check list. The process of change is evidenced by the following observations:

1. 75% exhibited change within their top three scales.
2. 63% narrowed their range of top choices.
3. 25% expanded the range of their top choices.

These results indicate that the process of change involving interpretations, concerns and viewpoints was in evidence. It may be hypothesized that this process encouraged career realism in terms of the self, flexibility of goals and acceptance of ambiguity within society. A number of participants became aware of the possibilities of looking beyond their immediate field.

Three open-ended questions were asked as part of the posttest situation. The responses were categorized and tabulated. The questions and percentage of replies are presented in Tables I, II, and III.

TABLE I

As of today, how do you feel about yourself in terms of entering an occupational field in contrast to your feelings at the beginning of the course?	
Became sure of personal need	6%
Became sure of career field	12%
Increased thinking about self in terms of work	32%
Know more about available sources	6%
Reinforced ideas about career choice	38%
Helped generally as applied to occupations	6%

Almost one-third found the experience stimulating in terms of considering themselves within a vocation. Over one-third found reinforcement of their career choices from the course experience.

TABLE II

What experiences and activities within the course had an impact on your career planning?	
Resource personnel	33%
Visitations	27%
Group interactions	33%
Opportunity to learn about self	7%

Two-thirds of the class indicated the importance of group interactions and resource personnel. This indicates they not only profit from resources but from fellow students.

TABLE III

Are there other activities that you feel would be beneficial to the development of career choice?	
Make experiences available to underclassmen	67%
Use of tests to help understand self	25%
Fieldwork experience	8%

Over two-thirds suggested the greatest need for a career emphasis approach to be with the freshmen and sophomores. The idea was that their occupational choices had not necessarily been made at these earlier levels, therefore would profit from this approach.

Conclusions

As suggested by pretest and posttest results career oriented activities within a class situation motivated a process of thinking and concerns about the self and career. Open-ended questions suggest the need of these experiences with freshmen and sophomores, and imply the most effective activities as viewed by the participants.

The subjects were juniors and seniors, therefore career decisions are more apt to have been firmly made as evidenced by the 38% response to the contribution of the experinces of reinforcing career ideas.

Based on these conclusions, it may be concluded that it is feasible to develop career orientation, career awareness and self awareness within a formal college course.

Implications

The implications of this pilot study are delineated as follows:

1. This research has demonstrated the feasibility of incorporating a career emphasis to match student concerns within a scheduled formal class. These results offer a basis for expanded research of this type.

2. The results of this study suggest the emphasis of career-oriented activities to be more appropriate for freshmen and sophomores. Further investigation is warranted.

3. A larger sample is implied for statistical as well as practical significance. This warrants further testing.

4. Student needs and concerns are proposed as a feasible base for activities relating to careers. Future work should further delineate and evaluate for optimal experiences.

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INSTRUMENTS

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